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longs to no school, he is just Winslow Homer—a separate and distinct personality, almost as detached from groups and movements as if no one else had been painting during his lifetime. He was one of the most acute observers that ever lived, almost every picture he ever painted being the result of a fresh observation of nature differing from all previous observations, and he covered an extraordinarily wide range of subjects including figures, animals, landscape and, above all, the sea. He had little academic training and never mastered the structure of the human figure, but his native sense of weight and mass gave his figures bulk and even a certain majesty, and he almost infallibly finds the one right and inevitable attitude to express the action and the state of mind of his personages; while the same sense of weight and bulk and movement which confers expression and dignity upon his figures gives an unequalled power and veracity to his pictures of surf and rock. No great painter had ever less amenity or less care for the purely decorative and æsthetic elements of art. His coloring is sometimes powerful, sometimes almost non-existent, but is never subtle and seldom beautiful. His handling is vigorous but rude and even harsh and repellent. In everything his work is calculated to give the utmost sense of unmitigated truthfulness and he is quite ready to forego charm—if he is even conscious of the existence of such a thing.

All this is realism, but it is a very different realism from that which deals primarily with the visual aspects of things. If it had occurred to Homer to paint a hermit, which, since he saw no hermits in the world he knew, is a quite unlikely supposition, there could have been no doubt as to what was the principal subject of the picture. The hermit himself and his human significance would have been everything to us and to the artist. That the picture should have become a sort of puzzle of light and air, or challenge us to find the hermit, is quite inconceivable. It is first this power of dealing with essentials, whatever the subject on which he is engaged—a power in which he is akin to such a true classicist as Millet—that raises Homer out of the ranks of the mere naturalists and marks him as a great interpretative artist; and with it—perhaps a part of it—an extraordinary capacity for vital and original design. He is certainly one of the most remarkable painters

of his time, and his peculiarly native quality gives us an especial right to be proud of him.

OTHER AMERICANS

How much our contemporary painters of the sea owe to the example of Homer it is difficult to judge, but we have a whole school of marine painters such as, I think, exists nowhere else. Waugh is the most exact realist of the school, Dougherty perhaps the most brilliant painter, while Emil Carlsen adds to his profound knowledge of nature an unfailingly decorative sense of color and line. The most conspicuous of our present-day landscape painters are direct and rapid sketchers of nature's aspects such as Schofield, Redfield, Gardner Symons and a host of others. A more delicate and penetrating observation marks the work, whether in landscape or figure, of Julian Alden Weir and is combined with a charming personal caprice in the pictures of T. W. Dewing; while a quiet and thoughtful naturalism is the principal characteristic of Sergeant Kendall. Finally, in the work of what is known as the Boston school, with Edmund C. Tarbell at its head, we have a naturalism akin to that of Stevens, less witty and less technically admirable, but pushing the study of interior-lighting to a higher refinement.

If, in all this naturalistic effort of the last seventy-five years, there has been some neglect of the higher aims and qualities of art, yet the naturalistic movement has been in the main a wholesome one. At least the naturalists have never forgotten that it is the business of a painter to paint, that painting is essentially and necessarily an imitative art, and that, if an exhaustive analysis of the aspects of nature is not artistic creation, yet all acquired knowledge of such aspects is an invaluable tool in the hands of the artistic creator. They have been equally free from the pedantries of a hide-bound pseudo-classicism on the one hand and from the excesses of a lawless individualism on the other. In an age not very propitious to the creation of art, because the natural relations of the artist to his public have been dislocated, they have at least kept the tools of art bright and furbished, and the best of them have produced works of real merit which are likely always to retain some interest for mankind.

Kenyon Cox

ADDRESS BEFORE THE AMERICAN ACADEMY AND INSTITUTE

Translation of a Paper read before the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters

By PROFESSOR GUSTAVE LANSON

LADIES, GENTLEMEN!

Seeing that the National Institute of Arts and Letters and the American Academy have done me the very great honor to ask me to read before you at this important meeting, my first words can only consist of an expression of my profound gratitude. I know very well that this honor goes beyond what is due to my own person, and that I owe the compliment especially to my country, to France, whose civilization, literature and arts are admired here

with so warm an affection. This I know; but to the heart of a Frenchman this fact only renders the debt larger and pleasanter to acknowledge.

Ladies, gentlemen!

In the literary life of France there has been noted for several centuries—and this is one of the most remarkable of its characteristics—a kind of rhythm, a movement of upward and down—which causes us alternately now to open, now to close the importation of foreign ideas and of foreign forms of art.

Periods of imitation follow upon the periods of creation and in turn make room for the reverse without our ever remaining for any length of time simply ourselves.

We are Italians, Greeks, Latins, Spaniards before being ourselves. Then we throw ourselves into Anglomaniac and we become obsessed with the idea of a gentle, and dreamy and housekeeping Germany. In fine you have seen us recently throw ourselves headlong into Tolstoism and Ibsenism, not to say Nietzsche-ism; and to some degree it is your William James who has caused us to trifle with Pragmatism.

Very often these phenomena have been observed with indignation by contemporaries, and by historians with severity. By an association of ideas that was involuntary and almost a fatality, such times of foreign influence in our literature have become identical in our mind with the cursed period when the stranger has invaded our soil, occupied our cities and menaced the very existence of the people.

Breezes from without, it has been said, are mortal to the French spirit, and it was gravely reasoned that it (the French mind) could not open up without changing itself, could not call in ideas without abandoning itself and playing the traitor!

There is a good bit of illusion in this, ladies and gentlemen. People imagine to themselves I know not what battle between indigenous and foreign *genres*, just as in a primitive picture the Virtues and Vices appear at war with one another. On this reasoning it becomes a national misfortune when a foreign *genre* overcomes the indigenous *genre*, or when the French idea is extinguished by the idea from outside. But let us consider matters as they are: in these fantastic unreal battles the only real thing is the spirit—the French spirit, which marches onward toward a larger measure of Truth and of Beauty, and which always makes a gain when it comes into possession of an idea—for is it the Idea that captures it, or it that seizes the Idea?

The point of view of Joachim du Bellay is the more correct, when he likened to a conquest the introduction of the wealth of a strange tongue into our own, and invited the youth of France to advance and pillage the literatures of Greece, Rome and Italy.

That is no paradox. If you will be pleased to reflect upon the function that the intermittent influx of foreign thought and art has exercised on the literary life of our country, you will perceive that, far from representing a lessening of vitality, a depression or exhaustion, it manifests on the contrary the will to exist, the power and renaissance of a genius still active and robust.

The function I speak of is twofold. In its one aspect, which one discovers at first, it consists in raising the national soul above itself and, by nourishing, aiding to develop it. One would have to have a very badly built mind in order to refuse to send a child to school out of fear lest he might corrupt there the original purity of his nature. But it would not be a case of having any healthier a mind, if in adult age one should pretend to owe nothing to anybody but oneself, to one's own development, to one's personal discoveries, and to refuse all the acquisitions for which one must be beholden to others. None other is the case with regard to nations. Whoever shuts himself up to the contem-

plation of himself and believes that he has nothing to obtain from others will surely exhaust himself, put himself out of joint and dry up more or less quickly; his light is condemned to be extinguished.

We Frenchmen are a queer people. We have never been able to support with tranquillity the fact that other persons should understand what we do not, or should enjoy the pleasures that we do not feel. Any advance made by others in letters or the arts has fired us to emulation, incited us to follow in their track, not in order to march behind them but to overtake them if we could and to overpass them. We presented ourselves in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries with a Tragedy, because the Greeks and Italians possessed one. We presented ourselves in the nineteenth century with a Lyric Poetry, because the English and the Germans had one. Our will has followed our intellect; our effort to create has been directed by the clear-cut idea of what we lacked and what we perceived among other nations.

Who knows whether we would not have remained far below our normal selves, had it not been for these incitements from outside? During four or five centuries, from the Middle Ages to the sixteenth century, we possess a flourishing theatre; yet the dramatic art does not progress. One day we set ourselves to imitate Seneca and Sophokles, not to say Trissino or Giraldi—and it turns out that this art of the drama, which we had not known how to organize by ourselves, is one of the most assured vocations of French genius! Thus it is that at the first beginnings of many of our progressive movements there lies an influence from outside, an intention to imitate, which, far from quenching our originality, on the contrary awakes it and forces us to draw out of ourselves that latent power, the existence of which within us might have never come, otherwise, to our consciousness.

The second, the other function of foreign literatures which is not less important, has been to give back at certain moments the right of being ourselves—more than once the influence from outside has been that of a liberator. At one time it is Latinity that frees us from the sway of Italianism, at another time England helps us to throw off the Greco-Roman stencil. But at times, also, one of the cultured nations or the other has delivered us from ourselves.

It sometimes happens that the masterpieces of genius are used in order to paralyze genius. We do not remember that Corneille and Racine only did, as Flaubert said, "that which they wished to"; and that those who came after them were condemned to do, not, as they were able, the thing they wished, but whatever was in accordance with the masters—and that whether they wished or not. No plays were considered "correctly done" except those that were cast in the molds of Augier and Dumas *filis*, unless it were in those of Scribe or Sardou. It was not a question of resemblance to life or the expansion of a personal estimate of life. It was a question of not varying from the models. Then it was that whoever had something to say, whoever had conceived an idea or perceived a beauty which the technic did not permit, rose in rebellion, now in the name of Shakespeare, again in the name of Ibsen, to-day for an English ideal, to-morrow for a Scandinavian—as a matter of fact always for himself,

for the intimate and personal ideal of his poetic nature.

It has come about also that French society has changed its character, has acquired new sentiments, new methods of reacting against the eternal conditions of human destiny or the modified conditions of national existence. In the meantime the writer folk do not trouble themselves and their quiet little trade for so small a thing, but continue to furnish the public—which is no longer the same public—with the same old products. Then that public turns itself away from an art that was made for its great grandfathers and goes off to ask from foreign works the ideas, emotions and poetic beauty which correspond to the secret aspirations of the present day.

People turn to Ossian because they have Bernis; they turn toward Byron because they have Parny.

Imitation is a means to liberation. For three-quarters of a century the souls of Frenchmen had been inflated with romantic sentiments, when the Romanticism of the *Cénacle*, whilst putting on the air of sacrificing classical traditions to an unhealthy taste for exotic eccentricities, just simply broke to pieces the superannuated forms, cast in new molds a petrified language and adapted French literature anew to French life. Lamartine and Musset have written the poetry which Mademoiselle de Lespinasse demanded with all the passion of her stormy and insatiate heart, but such as she could not obtain from the men of great polish and taste who surrounded her.

In that direction an apparent contradiction is explained, by which one cannot fail to be struck. We French people are seen during the course of our history with eyes always fixed on the foreign literatures, employed in admiring and introducing and copying them. And always we are told that we are incapable of understanding them. The English amuse themselves with our Shakespearean imitations; and Mariano de Larra bursts out laughing at the Spain he finds in "Hernani." It is a fact that the great number of our Romanticists and frequently those who are daubed the most with exotic clay do not understand or understand badly German, English and even Spanish.

The truth is that what interests us is not the reproduction of foreign thoughts or the foreign poem as they are, along with whatever it may be that makes them resemble and please the nation which produced them. We take from it only that which is useful to us. The idea of it which we frame for ourselves, whether true or false, only needs to be adapted to the unexpressed dream of our heart. We make out of Shakespeare or Byron, Schiller or Ibsen, in accordance with the times, just that which Montaigne made out of Plutarch and Seneca. We are not seeking out their meaning but our own, and we talk in accordance with them "in order to express ourselves so much the better."

Undoubtedly it is possible that one writer or another may be crushed beneath the weight of his booty, that at one moment or another the imitation may become mechanical and servile. I do not propose to rehabilitate the *Franciade* of Ronsard, who

was a great poet nevertheless and a vast genius. But these unlucky experiences are just the things that trace the bounds of possible and fruitful appropriations from outside, and the very checks received one day prepare for the victory to-morrow. It was necessary to massacre many a tragedy during the course of nearly a century in order that the perfection of the *Cid* and the *Horace* could be realized.

I know also that there are peoples whose minds are unable to receive an alien influence without being oppressed by it, without losing originality. Be sure of this, they have only lost what they did not possess. I have my doubts of a personality which evaporates so easily in the sunlight and dissolves at the first contact. In any case I do not fear anything so far as France is concerned. "Tant-pis" doctors prescribe that the French mind should keep its room and undergo a diet. They forbid all travel lest it catch cold; they forbid all eating for fear that by an absorption of foreign substances it might alter its essence. That is to treat it like a person having very little health. I believe it is more robust and capable of reaction against all the pressures from outside, capable of assimilating all the food it can absorb. Our past is warrant in my mind for our future. We have very fairly digested Rome.

This power of assimilation and the curiosity which supplies the materials are in strict correspondence with the most marked characteristics of our literature, the traits which Brunetière has defined so eloquently in one of his finest essays. Other literatures are perhaps more original than ours; nationality and race may cause themselves to be more powerfully felt in them; they have preserved better their independence, their purity, the savor of their country. In our literature the characteristics of nationality have become less apparent. We have not developed in the direction of particularity and localism but in that of universality, of humanity in general. We have desired that one might become more French in the same degree that one becomes more human. We have never known what French verities might be; we only know about Verity without an epithet—the verity that belongs to all mankind.

That is the reason we have always welcomed all the ideas of all the nations. We have treated them as our own ideas, filtered and humanized in order to distribute them afterward through Europe and throughout the entire world. The civilizing virtue of our literature consists in the fact we have never repulsed either a form of truth or a form of beauty as if alien to our race. The power of our expression is built by our own proper receptiveness. If at times Europe, if the whole world at times has given an almost universal empire to our tongue, that is because they considered—they knew—that we did not bring to them any tyranny of an ethnic temperament, but the light of human reason.

Could we have been enabled to play this historical part, which is a glory to us, if we had entertained the puerile and illusory fancy of remaining uncontaminated—the vainglorious and savage pretension not to mingle our minds with the minds of other peoples and to give, without receiving in turn?

Gustave Lanson